

Abroad

Rio de Janeiro

African Venture

President João Figueiredo has just returned from the first visit to Africa ever made by a Brazilian head of state, the purpose of the visit being to give further impetus to Brazil's effort to build its own power base in the Third World. A glance at the map shows Brazil's relative geographic proximity to the African continent, and there is a further connection in the fact of a shared language with Portugal's former African colonies. So President Figueiredo paid calls at Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. But he is not just a sentimentalist, so he also spent two days each in Algeria, Senegal, and Nigeria, far more important places from the economic point of view. Brazil's financial situation has for some time limited the scope of its African adventures, but the interest remains keen, and some solid markets have been established beyond the cultural outlets in Portuguese-speaking communities. Algeria, for example, has proved to be an important market for Brazilian automotive products as well as for engineering contracts. A reciprocal trade agreement is under discussion in Lagos; it would involve credit exchanges between Nigeria and Brazil worth up to \$1 billion. Brazilian authorities want the Third World to stop thinking of Brazil as economically tied to the United States, and to start thinking of it as a country that has the capability and enthusiasm for becoming a valued trading partner elsewhere.

Islamabad

Not Yet

Diplomatic observers here have lately concluded that there is no foreseeable end to the occupation of Afghanistan by 115,000 Soviet troops. Some hope had been aroused last year after Pakistani President General Zia Ul-haq's conversations in Moscow with Yuri Andropov, who was said to have opposed the invasion of Afghanistan in the first place. It was then that Zia spoke of "a fresh approach." But as long as the firmness of Andropov's hold on his position of power remains in doubt, so do all chances of a definite resolution of the status of the occupation. Recently, though, Pakistani Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan said that he did not expect any major change even if the Soviets achieve a "breakthrough," i.e., wrest from the guerrillas a serious measure of control over the Afghan countryside, especially over the southern and eastern border regions.

London

Bumper Crop

Research farmers in Hampshire have just finished harvesting a wheat crop using the forerunner of the modern combine developed by the Celts of Britain in Roman times. The machine, made of wood and pushed by a cow, was used this fall to harvest primitive wheat grown for the purpose. The machine, called a *vallas*, is one of the earliest examples of farm machinery. It is, in effect, a deep blade with wooden teeth on two wheels with a gathering bin behind. When pushed into the grain, its teeth lop off the ears, which then fall into the bin and are collected for threshing. The *vallas*, in this case, was pushed by a Dexter cow, one of a small and ancient British breed, thought to be the closest relative to the cattle

of 200 A.D., when the *vallas* was first developed. The contraption needs only one man to guide it. Primitive wheat, British agronomists have found, yields only half as much grain as the modern strain of wheat, but it has twice as much protein. Moreover it grows strongly in weed-filled fields, which eliminates the need for cultivation and pesticides. Such wheat was used to feed Roman legions stationed in Britain, and it grew in such abundance that it was even exported to the Continent in quantity.

Tokyo

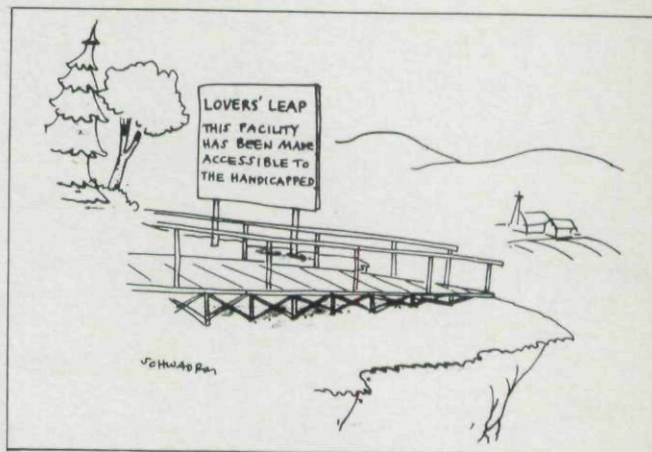
Faster Foods

Kentucky Fried Chicken has turned into a \$300-million-a-year business in Japan, leading a pack of American fast-food enterprises that includes McDonald's, Wendy's, Dunkin' Donuts, and Baskin-Robbins. Kentucky Fried Chicken was the first to break the barrier in 1969, when American entrepreneur Loy Weston opened the first outlet. Now he has nine thousand employees, all but one of them Japanese. Weston says the chicken is the same as in the United States, but it comes with French fries, instead of mashed potatoes and gravy, to suit the Japanese palate. Japanese like their salads less sweet than Americans do, so the sugar content in the chain's salads has been cut in half. Most of his 390 shops are in the center of cities, near the railroad stations, because most Japanese travel by train. Weston's menu also features chicken sandwiches, fish and chips, and corn on the cob only three inches long instead of the five-inch ears sold in America, because "the Japanese like a lot of little things."

York

Happy Breed

British environmental authorities have given up their search for a contraceptive pill for wild rabbits, mostly because they cannot find a substance that will work long enough to interrupt the animals' reproductive capabilities. Rabbits begin to breed at six months and can produce several litters of young a year. The pill had seemed like an attractive solution because it does not stimulate "compensatory breeding responses," meaning that if pill-taking female rabbits in one area cease to give birth those elsewhere will not breed overtime to compensate, as they would with other methods of control, extermination for instance. The Ministry of Agriculture has now shifted its focus to poisons, especially the sorts (used on rats) that cause lung hemorrhaging. There will need to be a change in the law that prohibits mass poisoning of rabbits, but, given the dimensions of the problem, this is not considered an enduring obstacle.



Schwadron, *Punch*

Rothco

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